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SOURCE Szabad Nep.

EXPLAINS SERIOUS MEAT SHORTAGE;
SEES MORE MEAT IN 4-5 MONTHS

Imre Nagy
 Minister of Food

The present meat shortage, the result of last year's higher rate of slaughter and consumption, constitutes a serious problem. Never before had so many pigs and suckling pigs, cattle and calves been slaughtered in Hungary as in 1950. Since August 1950, the farmers have slaughtered or sold their animals because of the extremely bad corn and other fodder crops caused by the severe drought. Thus, the present deficiencies in the meat supply can be attributed to the bad crop. The slaughterhouses, operating in three shifts, could hardly satisfy the demand.

The livestock census taken in February 1951 showed that the number of pigs had decreased by 2 million in 9 months, and, even more serious, the number of sows by one third. The decrease of cattle was 15-20 percent.

While there had been abundant meat supplies from September to October 1950, spring 1951 brought a serious shortage, which was followed by speculation and illegal slaughtering resulting in the further decline of the already decimated livestock. To insure a minimum supply for the consumers, as well as to stop a further decrease of livestock, harsh regulations were introduced. This circumstance explains why the available meat supply is much smaller now than in 1950 and below the normal requirements. It must be emphasized, however, that the current meager per-capita ration is still substantially greater than in rich England, where much smaller rations are available of salted, frozen, or canned meat only.

Considering the normal meat consumption in Hungary, however, the present ration is small. The meat supply difficulties are aggravated by the fact that while a good harvest solves the problem of bread consumption, it takes more time to secure a normal meat supply.

- 1 -

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How then, can the meat shortage be solved? If as many animals were to be sent to the slaughterhouses as in 1950 or 1949, then the livestock would decrease more rapidly, and the consumer would eat today what he should use tomorrow or the day after. This policy would lead to an even more difficult situation, which could not be solved in the foreseeable future, and would make the meat shortage permanent. Therefore, this solution is not recommended.

The difficulties can be overcome quickly and safely by a smaller meat consumption for a few more months. During that period, the livestock -- with the help of this year's bumper crop -- must be developed, and the state-owned pigsties must be filled with pigs for fattening. With accelerated fattening, considerable quantities could be placed on the market in 4 or 5 months; thus, slowly but surely, the population's entire meat requirement could be secured.

Due to the good barley crop and the prospective excellent corn crop, there will soon be more pigs available for fattening than at any time since the liberation. As a result, at the end of October and in November, when the poultry and pigs fattened on the new corn reach the market, the meat situation will improve quickly.

The present meat shortage is alleviated by the excellent crop of garden vegetables and potatoes. Because great quantities of these products are consigned to Budapest and other cities, the state railroads have a serious transportation problem. The traffic has almost reached its spring peak, although transportation of the principal agricultural products, such as grain and fodder, has not even begun.

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- 2 -

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